

United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

Categorical Exclusion Not Established By Statute
DOI-BLM-2014-0045-CX

September, 2014

Topaz Existing Vent Modification

Location: T44N, R18W, Sec 15, SE¼NE ¼

Applicant/Address:

Piñon Ridge Mining, LLC
31161 Highway 90, PO Box 825
Nucla, Colorado 81424-0825
United States of America

Tres Rios Field Office
29211 HWY 184
Dolores, CO 81321
970-882-6800
970-882-6841



B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: San Juan-San Miguel RMP Date Approved/Amended: 1985

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s): The proposed project is in emphasis areas E and A, at a mine that was in operation at the time the plan was approved. Emphasis area A's minerals guidance says: "Allow mineral development in all areas not withdrawn from entry. Provide Protective Stipulation to limit impacts to livestock improvements or management practices." Emphasis area E's minerals guidance states: "Allow mineral development on all areas not specifically excluded from development. Provide protective stipulations to limit impacts to other resource values... Continue approved operations of 4500 acres of hard rock mining under 43 CFR 3809 regulations."

C. Compliance with NEPA

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with:

1) H 1790 Appendix 4 F #7 "Approval of minor modifications to or minor variances from activities described in an approved exploration plan for leasable, salable, and locatable minerals". The activity is essentially the same as exploration drilling and exploration drilling has occurred under the existing plans.

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR Part 46.215 apply.

The existing design features and abandonment plans will apply to this vent hole. Applicable mitigation measures from the approved mine plan (COC-52049) will also apply.

D: Signature

Authorizing Official: _____



Date: _____

9.25.14

Connie Clementson
Field Manager

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact

James Blair
Geologist,
Tres Rios Field Office
970-882-6862

Environmental Coordinator _____

Date: _____

Exceptions to Categorical Exclusion Documentation

The action has been reviewed to determine if any of the extraordinary circumstances (43 CFR 46.215) apply. The project would:

Extraordinary Circumstances		
1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		
No	Rationale: <i>The vent already exists and is attached to an existing mine that is already open to the atmosphere. No people or permanent residents live within several miles.</i>	
2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		
No	Rationale: <i>The area is within the permit boundary of an existing mine in a landscape with dozens of other vents, drill roads, shafts, etc, and as such will blend in. No historic or cultural resources, aquifers, prime farmlands, wetlands, monuments, etc will be affected by changing administration from a notice to a plan.</i>	
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section 102 (2) (E)].		
Yes	No	Rationale: The vent is already in place the decision is only administrative.
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		
No	Rationale: The vent would continue to exist without the decision. Multiple other vents exist nearby.	
5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		
No	Rationale: <i>An EA is currently in process to fully evaluate the potential effects of mining at the Sunday, Carnation, St. Jude, Topaz, and West Sunday mines. This vent is part of those proposed actions. Any additional vents would need to be proposed as a separate mine plan modification and not processed as a notice. Bonding is currently in place.</i>	
6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		
No	Rationale: <i>The vent would exist even if not incorporated into the existing plan.</i>	
7. Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the bureau.		

Extraordinary Circumstances		
	No	Rationale: <i>there are no properties listed or eligible for listing that would be affected.</i>
8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.		
	No	Rationale: No impacts to species listed or proposed to be listed were identified for the notice, and administration under the plan would not effect that.
9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		
	No	Rationale: <i>There would be no violations to Federal, State or Local law. There would be no additional impacts beyond what is on the ground.</i>
10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).		
	No	Rationale: <i>The decision would not authorize any activity, only incorporate existing disturbance into a plan.</i>
11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).		
	No	Rationale: <i>The decision would not authorize any activity, only incorporate existing disturbance into a plan.</i>
12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).		
	No	Rationale: <i>weeds would be controlled along with other weeds under the existing topaz mine plan.</i>